

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, November 13, 1896, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreagh Laboratory Annex. Friday, November 13, 1896. My darling little wife:

For several days past I have been in the laboratory by 10 o'clock A. M. — and I have found 7 or 8 hours steady work per day — with only a slight intermission for lunch quite exhaustive. I have intended to give you a nice long letter — but I have been so tired and sleepy that I thought it better to go to bed rather than run the risk of waking myself up by writing — and then fail to appear in the laboratory until afternoon. Today — I have sent Mr. Ellis home to lunch — alone — and will now occupy lunch time here in writing to you. Mr. Ellis will bring me a cheese sandwich and a cup of tea when he returns so I will be able to sustain existence until the evening 3 bells strike!

This is the night for shooting stars. The earth is not expected to encounter the main swarm of meteors until about Nov. 13th, 1899 but for some years before the great shower appears the November meteors become more numerous as the time approaches for the great encounter. If then it should turn out to be a fine night — there may be some chance of seeing more meteors than usual this evening. It would be worth while looking out for them for at least three nights. These meteors are “Leonids” — appearing to emanate from a point in the constellation Leo — the Lion. But unfortunately the Lion does not get up till very late at this season — so that the radiant point will not appear 2 above the horizon till two or three o'clock in the morning — or later. I expect to be in bed by 11 o'clock — but will probably be awake by that time — and if so will look out for meteors.

You see I am writing on the back of this page instead of taking another so as to economize stamps! After your scolding me for wasting two words in a telegram! You see I am afraid to

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throw away a cent. But these two words were not due to me but to Dunlap. I gave his the address by telephone and told him to spell the figures. I had no idea he would telegraph:

“One thousand three hundred and thirty one” (or whatever the figure was) — when I had given him the numbers by telephone in the usual way, viz: “thirteen thirty-one” I had no idea that the figures had been sent in the way mentioned — until your letter arrived.

I am very much troubled at our inability to make both ends meet. The trouble is not with our income but with us. Our income is large enough to enable us to live in comfort — if we adjust our expenditures to correspond to it. If we don't do this we will be poor however much we have. Were our income ten times what it is now we would have the same trouble and worry we have now — probably ten times as much. I had the idea that we could get along well enough if we rigidly adhered to the principle “Don't overdraw your bank account on any pretense.” But this does not seem to work. We should add — Don't borrow.” That is only 3 another way of over-drawing.

The trouble this year is — that we borrowed fifteen hundred dollars — and of course we are now that much short at least. Now I want to say that I had no idea we had borrowed \$1500 — until after it had been done. I haven't said anything about it — because it had been done. But I don't know how it came about that this money should have been borrowed without my knowledge. Perhaps while I was away in the summer time.

I don't mean to say that it may not have been necessary — or advisable — but it was an over-draft upon the future — and so must look ahead sufficiently to avoid this. Of course we had a good many visitors this summer and exceptional expenses — and I have no doubt that I would have thought it best to borrow under the circumstances, but what troubles me is — that I was not consulted about it, (at least so far as I can remember) before the debt was incurred.

Have got a lot of laboratory material almost ready for you — but Angus has just come for the mail. I must close now. Think this is a good plan — can be sure of some quiet

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uninterrupted time here — at the Annex — between 1 and 2 o'clock. Received a lovely letter from Elsie last night.

With much love. Your loving husband, Alec. Mrs. A. G. Bell, Washington, D. C.